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How to cite

Luzi M. (2016), Happiness: Ethic Duty and Man's Dimension, [Italian Sociological Review, 6 (2), 205-224]

Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.13136/isr.v6i2.101>

[DOI: 10.13136/isr.v6i2.101]

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3. Article accepted for publication

September 2015

**Additional information about
Italian Sociological Review
can be found at:**

About ISR-Editorial Board-Manuscript submission

Happiness: Ethic Duty and Man's Dimension

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Abstract

Happiness can be imagined as the final destination of an individual path, but also as the starting point towards a better existential dimension, more fulfilling, more attractive and hence more satisfying. Happiness can be an experience or a frame of mind, an image, a historical event, a city, a thought, an “other” from us: the main character is always a human being, together with other human beings. Certainly, among the essential ingredients of happiness, we must include the achievement of important goals, self-esteem and social acknowledgement.

In the contemporary society, the concept of happiness is emerging more and more like almost exclusively founded on possess, fastened to a robust individualist perspective, where the achievement of personal wellbeing is emphasized, excluding whatever contact and relationship, but to experience true happiness we need not to withdraw from others, but looking for others. The other man, the other woman, all living beings: plants, herbs, animals on earth, sea, air should be met, touched, watched, so that we may be amazed and charmed by their magnificence and disaster, by their beauty and their ability to unsettle.

Keywords: happiness, unhappiness, wellbeing, social capital, art of life.

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Introduction

“Just because you’re not exceptional
doesn’t mean you
don’t have a right to be happy” (Phillips 2010, 26).

Every man longs for happiness. He looks for it constantly, he desires it fervently. Happiness is his craved destination that, nonetheless, seems to slip away tirelessly, as it is seduced, misled and betrayed by the thousands traps of the real world (Natali 2014). There is a constant tension between the individual’s utmost aim and reality, that is the dimension in which the human being undertakes his daily effort to pursue happiness.

Happiness, therefore, can be imagined as the final destination of an individual path, but also as the starting point towards a better existential dimension, more fulfilling, more attractive and hence more satisfying. Since happiness is a subjective quality, each man can decide whether he feels happy or not. However, when one is aware of his happiness, this already belongs to the past.

In the meanderings of a psychological and sociological path, therefore, happiness reveals itself to human beings as a process of generation and regeneration of its being and its existence (Sotgiu 2013).

So, wondering what happiness is and, on the other hand, what unhappiness is, means conjecturing a fundamental sociological issue, as happiness is what defines the existential boundary of each person and the values on which societies have lied on throughout history.

For this reason, we do not have any absolute definition of happiness, nor has it any determinate and unchanging characteristic (Blackshaw 2009). The human’s effort lies exactly in the difficulty to define it in an exhaustive way. Etymologically, the definition of happiness presents certain problems, for the denotation is different languages, and many languages employ several terms to denote facets and nuances of the experience. In English, happiness comes from the root hap, meaning chance, good look or fortune (Götz 2010).

We can’t talk of one and absolute concept of happiness, but of many different types of happiness: one for each individual, who can recognize his own through the experiences he has gained and the ambitions he has nurtured. We can only say that happiness, or more precisely the idea of happiness, involves a moral path and precise choices. It is a day-to-day achievement that can’t be never taken for granted. Happiness can be an experience or a frame of mind, an image, a historical event, a city, a thought, an “other” from us: the main character is always a human being, together with other human beings. Certainly, among the essential ingredients of happiness,

we must include the achievement of important goals, self-esteem and social acknowledgement. It is possible to define happiness as “feeling good – enjoying life and wanting that feeling to be maintained” (Layard 2005, 12). That definition captures the affective core of happiness in a way that connects well with people’s lived experience. There is, naturally, no shortage of more complex and elaborate definitions. The most compelling of these is from Haybron (2008), who defines happiness as a “positive emotional state” (Bartram 2012).

Sociologists are clearly interested in the well-being of the people they study (sometimes suggesting “policy implications” emerging from their empirical findings); happiness is a presumptively important form of well-being, and an engagement with happiness studies might constitute a way to develop more systematic connections between well-being and academic research (Michalos 2014). Building on existing findings, sociologists would be well-placed to consider the social context of happiness (as against an individualist orientation more common in other disciplines) as well as the unintended consequences of policy initiatives and happiness discourses (Diener et al 2010).

Long before becoming a philosophical and a sociological concept, happiness was a mythological image: the “Age of Gold”. The Greek poet Hesiod (VIII and VII cent. B.C.) in his text *The works and days* (1959) tells how humans used to live like divinities, free from pain and concerns, in a state of everlasting happiness. Humans were indeed mortals but their death was not a dramatic experience but more like a slow dying down. Life was a peaceful surviving; the ground bore fruits without anyone working. Ovid in his *Metamorphosis* (1986) recognises one kind of happiness, the one that is received, that reaches all humans. Happiness is therefore a universalising concept, a binding agent to Humanity (Bywater 1894).

Happiness, as a typical human experience, has one of its ground ideas in the concept of Eudaimonia (Kenny 1978). This Greek word means being protected and looked after by a benevolent demon, a sort of an intermediate divinity between humans and gods. If in Aristotelian eudaimonia “Felicity of this life consisted [...] in the repose of a mind satisfied,” it is precisely the want of this which impresses Hobbes (Prandstraller 1978). For “there is no such Finis ultimus (utmost aimed), nor summer Bonum (greatest Good)” (O’Neill 1994). Felicity “is the continual progress of the desire, from one object to another, the attaining of the former, being still but the way to the latter” (Hobbes 1968, 160).

Aristotle follows the Socratic direction: the pursuit of happiness has to proceed taking into account the ethical reason of one’s existence: “Even so, Aristotle was critical of the Socratic approach to knowledge in which it was

held that we can begin in error but come to know truth entirely through rational discourse, verbally stripping the husk of error to find the kernel of truth” (Josephs 2003, 36).

Humans’ choices are made for the fulfilment of a goal, in view of something for which it is worth living; what is important is to recognize the final purpose, the highest good. For Hobbes, instead, “the cessation of desire is what we call death, and felicity or happiness is the movement from one fulfilled desire to another” (Jha 2010, 110).

The concept of happiness has had its place of honour in the Declaration of America Independence of 1776 and then in the Declaration of Human Rights, developed after the French Revolution in 1793 (Donnelly 2013).

The first articles of the Declaration of Rights of Man in Society reads: “the purpose of society is the common happiness of people, and government is instituted to secure it. The felicity of the people consists in the enjoyment of liberty, security, property and equality of rights in the presence of the law” (Weekly Register from September 1812, 110).

Happiness between interpretations and definitions

Happiness was treated by the greatest theorists of sociological history (McMahon 2006). For Carl Marx in a capitalist society, rather than owning the fruits of their labors, the proletariat or working class owns only their labor power, not the fruits of their labors. The capitalists or bourgeoisie employ the proletariat for a living wage, but then keep the products of the labor. As a result, the proletariat is alienated from the fruits of its labor – they do not own the products they produce, only their labor power. Because Marx believed species being to be the goal and ideal of human nature and that species being could only be realized when individuals owned the results of their labors, Marx saw capitalism as leading toward increasingly unhappy individuals; they would be alienated from the results of their production and therefore would not be self-realized. Marx's proposed solution was for the proletariat to unite and through protests or revolution overthrow the bourgeoisie and institute a new form of government-communism. The means of production would be developed – through capitalism – to the point that everyone in society would have sufficient 'free' time to allow them to participate in whatever governmental decisions needed to be made for the community as a whole. By reconnecting the individual with the fruits of their labor and empowering them toward true self-governance, *species being* would be realized and happiness would be returned. For Marx, happiness is a human experience as well as an ideal. By this he means that happiness belongs to humans as humans, regardless of their social status, rank, power, or riches. Such happiness,

therefore, must be universal, not restricted to just one class, or one race. This does not mean that humans would enjoy the same type of happiness. Marx does not deny individuality. What he opposes is the restrictions imposed upon individuals in the pursuit of their happiness, restrictions based on class, race, or other artificial factors (Götz 2010, 157).

Durkheim's view of society and the changes it was undergoing as a result of industrialization also led him to believe unhappiness was a possible outcome. Émile Durkheim believed that an important component of social life was social solidarity, which is understood as *a sense of community* (Riley 2015).

Society, for Max Weber, would become almost synonymous with bureaucracy. As Weber did not see any alternative to bureaucracy, he believed it would ultimately lead to an *iron cage*: there would be no way to get out of it. Weber viewed this as a bleak outcome that would affect individuals' happiness as they would be forced to function in a highly rational society with rigid rules and norms without the possibility to change it. Because Weber could not envision other forces influencing the ultimate direction of society - the exception being temporary lapses into non-bureaucracy spurred by charismatic leaders - he saw no cure for the iron cage of rationality (Weber 1917). Society would become a large bureaucracy that would govern people's lives.

Bertrand Russell talks about happiness and affirms that “The secret of happiness is to face the fact that the world is horrible” (Edwards et al. 1967, 256). Then, in his book, *The Conquest of Happiness* he picks the concept up and highlights that “the secret of happiness is this: let your interests be as wide as possible, and let your reactions to the things and persons that interest you be as far as possible friendly rather than hostile” (1930, 157). In his book, Russell reflects on those people he knew who are happy and tried to formulate some rules about what makes them so. “Happiness - he points out - depends both on external and internal circumstances. The external things that are necessary for happiness are simple: food, shelter, health, love, successful work, the respect of the people in one's group, and at least for some, having children. People who possess these things yet are still unhappy - Russell says - suffer from psychological maladjustments, which, if serious, may require the aid of a therapist, though in most cases people can cure themselves” (Carey and Ongley 2009, 86).

Therefore, Russell analyzes the widespread discontentment and realises that all is focused on a general dissatisfaction deriving from a pessimistic view of life and of the world (Griffin 2003). A background of sadness as a result of an amoral and carelessness way of life (Catarinussi, 2006, 89). Where there is no happiness, inevitably there is unhappiness. It is a missed happiness, an

unachieved goal, a frustrated breath of life. Unhappiness lies also in a surplus of incomplete expectations or the result of a *modus vivendi e operandi* that creates opposition and conflict (Silver 2013). “The natural habitat of pursuit of happiness is the state of unhappiness, dissatisfaction, unfulfilment – in short the state of pain-generating suffering of deprivation (like being suppressed, alienated, estranged, abandoned, excluded, robbed of dignity and self-esteem, etc., etc.) And so you are right when suggesting that sociology derives its *raison d'être* from the social fact of pursuit of happiness being systematically frustrated” (Jacobsen 2014, 88).

The reasons of unhappiness may be different, just to mention a few: competition, tiredness, boredom, envy (Alberoni 1991).

Competition is the obsessive craving for success, is living the experience of the delirium of omnipotence, is the relentless research of self-realisation at any cost, is pursuing the dream of notoriety or of its semblance. By doing so, the sense of reality can be lost and the border of the social harmony trespassed. In addition, we assist a decadence of civil values –loyalty, honesty, legality, correctness – while seeing an affirmation of the ego over all other things. The spectrum of an exasperate individualism is brought to life and gains strength (Sotgiu 2013).

Tiredness, both physical and intellectual, makes you lose the right moral tension which is the only able to stop ethic distractions, blocking the way to the most diverse relativisms (Russel 1930).

Boredom, in its meaning of controversial desire of novelties, is the incentive to the desperate pursuit of something new every day (Powys 2011). This continuous research of ‘new’ is the epiphany of an existential uneasiness having deep roots. It doesn’t produce gratification, instead it opens the door to discomfort and to cosmic indifference. It is an excited state which doesn’t bring pleasure, but further uneasiness (Catarinussi 2006, 88).

About this topic, Russell talks of *excitement*. “Boredom as a factor in human behaviour has received, in my opinion, far less attention than it deserves. [...] A generation that cannot endure boredom will be a nation of little men, of men unduly divorced from the slow process of nature, of men in whom every vital impulse slowly withers as though they were cut flowers in a vase. [...] The opposite of boredom, in a word, is not pleasure, but excitement” (1930, 57-58).

Envy is an ancient passion, born together with man’s limits (de Nardis, 2000). Envy refers “to the state of mind of a person who is unable to bear someone else being something, having a skill, possessing something or enjoying a reputation which he lacks, and who in consequence will be pleased should the other lose the asset, although that loss will not mean his gain. Schoeck maintains that envy is a universal of human existence, and that it is

universally proscribed (1969, 105). The claim for the former is a hotch-potch of three arguments: that many writers have in many societies described envious behaviour; that envy is a basic, primary core-like drive; and that envy in anthropologically necessary to human existence” (Urry 1973, 67).

We live in a society in which, instead of taking delight in what we do, we suffer for what the others do and have (Catarinussi 2006, 173). Again Russell suggests that, in order to get free from envy, human beings should learn to appreciate the joys they meet during their path, and try to avoid making comparisons with those they consider more fortunate.

In the contemporary society, the concept of happiness is emerging more and more like almost exclusively founded on possess, fastened to a robust individualist perspective, where the achievement of personal wellbeing is emphasized, excluding whatever contact and relationship (Graham 2011). However, it is well known that happiness can't be measured with quantitative criteria, and a number of surveys highlight how the growth of economic wellbeing and luxury is not correlated to a parallel increase of happiness and personal gratification (Daly 2011).

The modern society is characterized by a progressive acceleration towards other destinations. The automation and in general the transformation and simplification of the way of working, with machines and robots substituting human beings, in reality deprives them of the gratification related to their industriousness (Bauman 2008, 10). The situation is the following: happiness depends on the degree of personal satisfaction and self-esteem, fulfilled thanks to a well done job; it does not depend on the abundance of available material goods (Hastie and Dawes 2010).

“Happiness is the affective component of subjective well-being” (Bartram 2012, 645). That is to say, such definitions rely on a view of happiness as residing within the individual, and are intimately related to historically specific designations in which happiness has become inextricably tied to aspects of a stratified self. Elias's argues that the predominance of this conception of humans in much contemporary social scientific writing and conceptual architecture is based in a much broader set of social processes (2012). Elias advances a relational sociology based upon an image of *homines aperti* - open, interdependent pluralities of humans (Salumets 2001, 9) - as a means of overcoming this dominant conception, which, he suggests, in turn underpins such dichotomies as the individual-society, structure-agency, mind-body, culture-nature, and so forth that are commonly encountered in much social scientific thinking (Savoia Landini and Dépelteau 2014). However, for the moment, it is worth noting that recent work in the sociology of emotions has begun to embrace the radically relational conceptualisation of emotions advanced by Elias, amongst others (Burkitt 2014), and has come to challenge

the idea that happiness is one of several 'basic' emotions that, like fundamental human essences, reside in 'us all' (Kaspersen and Gabriel 2013). The very notion, then, that happiness is a common emotion - and at that, one that can meaningfully be said to pervade all cultures in all historical periods - which in itself can 'flourish', in this context or that - is now increasingly coming to be challenged.

Zigmunt Bauman lead us to meditate that most of times we are more inclined to suffer an explication more than a definition of happiness.

"We also know when to say 'I'm happy' and when 'I'm not'. But most of us would be hard-pressed if asked to spell out the rule that has allowed us to apply one of the 'happiness – unhappiness' pairs of words to a particular case. We won't find it easy either to articulate clearly and unambiguously what we mean when we say 'I am happy' or 'I am unhappy'. More often than not, we would offer an explanation rather than the definition: we would say what in our view made us (or can make us) happy or unhappy, rather than what sort of experience we had and would like to report and communicate using one of those words. The experience of being happy or not is akin in this respect to the experience of a color. We know how to use the word red, but we do not know how to describe the experience of redness" (Bauman 2002, 121). We are happy as long as we have hope, which however can stay alive only if we can have available a series of new opportunities and new starts in a rapid succession, a perspective of a never-ending sequence of departures.

Bauman is convinced that if you long for happiness, you must deliberately expose yourself, making decisions and choices (Bauman and Bordoni 2014, 62). The result is that you actively build your own life, which must be saved from the passiveness of habits and from the cyclic repetition of old stereotypes; "life is a work of art, is not a postulate or an admonition (of the 'try to make your life beautiful, harmonious, sensible and full of meaning-just as painters try to make their paintings, or musicians their compositions' kind), but a statement of fact. Life can't not be a work of art if this is a human life – the life of a being endowed with will and freedom of choice. Will and choice leave their imprint on the shape of life, in spite of all and any attempts to deny their presence and/or to hide their power by ascribing the causal role to the overwhelming pressure of external forces that impose 'I must' where 'I will' should have been, and so narrow the scale of plausible choices" (Bauman 2008, 69).

The difficulty in reaching happiness is the same which prevents us from the firm realisation of a status of awareness, which can be obtained only becoming the author of our own life and adapting to a state of permanent transformation (Oxenham, 2013). The art of life is a challenge which encompasses constant changes, necessary to conform with the external

environment and to grab the relentless flow of new opportunities (Davis and Tester 2010).

Nowadays the mobility and fluidity of the different status become essential for the personal identification, whilst the exclusion is lethal (Betti and Lemmi 2013). In the succession of social acceptance or exclusion, individuals live with anguish the thread of the exclusion status and suffer the consequent humiliation of their identity. Inhumanity, cynic superficiality and absent-mindedness of *homo consumens* are the features of the liquid society which Bauman highlights only in as much as it shows the correspondent phenomenology (2007), as a deviance from a justice rule and a universally recognised dignity (2012).

About that it's interesting to underline that the idea of happiness has also appeared in China, in the world belonging to Mao Tse Tung, in order to appease the the 'middle class' and to manage the waits. To the Chinese 'white collars', around 700.000.000 individuals, are offered higher salaries, appliances, more fun, holidays, all things to which all the Europeans have been used to since the '60s of the last century. The slogan 'consume is glorious', spread by the new Chinese quinquennial plan, becomes the symbol of a new epoch, in which the search of the comfort and pleasure triumphs and the 'good life' become important. In all this there is by now an evident reality: the middle class in China is acquiring an always-increasing importance, has become essentials for advancement of the whole society.

However, this isn't only valid for China, the middle class is the spine of every economic development, for the simple reason that without an intermediary fringe poured in the technological development, in the professional abilities and in the intellectual creativeness it's unthinkable that development occurs and that therefore happiness can be reached (Prandstraller, 2013).

In his meditation about happiness, Bauman often refers to Wladyslaw Tatarkiewick (Elliot 2007). The Polish philosopher identifies four different meanings of the term happiness. The first refers to a correlation between the State of World and the State of Spirit (what happens determines happiness or unhappiness). The second meaning of happiness refers to feelings, sensations, emotions, mental status and thus a subjective meaning of happiness. The third concept is identified in a simple observation: a happy person is who is free from both poverty and redundancy. And finally the fourth concept is the result of a weighted comparison between joys and pains (Tatarkiewicz 1919). The idea of happiness, so multifaceted, allows to create and amplify a range of solutions for the issue of unhappiness. The concept of happiness, as the supreme objective of the life with which no other objectives should compete, has a very recent origin if measured with the meter of the human history

(Catarinussi, 2000). Even more recent is the elevation of happiness from the status of rare privilege intended as a reward allowed with great parsimony to poor and marginal people.

“It was only in the eighteenth century that the spectacular career of happiness as the supreme purpose of life took off in earnest. The American Declaration of Independence declared happiness to be the universal right of all humans. Becoming a right instead of being a privilege was a true watershed in the history of happiness. Rather than a reward for virtue or good deeds and an outcome of hard work and sacrifice, a crowing of a life of piety and self-immolation (or, alternatively, an unearned gift of Divine grace or a stroke of good fortune), happiness became a condition that all and each human being could demand as a birthright” (Bauman 2002, 139). Milan Kundera also agrees with this and states: “The more the fight for human rights gains in popularity the more it loses any concrete content, becoming a kind of universal stance of everyone towards everything, a kind of Energy that turns all human desires into rights. The world has become man’s right and everything in it has become a right: the desire for love the right to love, the desire for friendship the right to friendship, the desire to exceed the speed limit the right to exceed the speed limit, the desire for happiness the right to happiness” (1991, 154).

For Bauman, being happy means therefore facing the reality. Action and inaction are already a step forward toward the pursuit of happiness, however taking a critical attitude. There is also an important implication. Thanks to its omni-comprehensively feature, the idea of happiness, making unbearable the unhappy situations, pushes humans to rebel and claim for a change, an intuition of redemption; it stimulates them to constantly ask questions and answers, to a path (with some obstacles now and then) without long pauses (Gini 2006). “Is there something that can be said about happiness with confidence, without expecting opposition? There is: that happiness is a good thing – to be desired and cherished. Or that it is better to be happy than to be unhappy. But these two pleonasm are about *all* that can be said of happiness with well-grounded self-assurance. All other sentences involving the word ‘happiness’ are certain to arouse controversy. For an outside observer, one person’s happiness may well be difficult to distinguish from another person’s orror” (Bauman 2008, 23). Happiness is radically described by Bauman as an ethic value, intended as a rational experience, a research of something that may give sense to one’s and to others’ life, and that may be identified as physical and psychic wellbeing (Beilharz 2000).

All humans pursue happiness (Bauman 1993). But among billions of individuals, who knows what it is?

The pursuit of happiness has been established as an absolute paradigm of realization of a human being (Jefferson 2009).

However, is it opportune wondering: on what makes us happy? The definition of the ideal of happiness regards to what makes the individual happy, regardless of the condition of what gravitates in his environment. Happiness is an instant where desire and satisfaction, past and expectations, are realized in the ephemeral purchase, then decreased and reinvented in other desires and needs.

Then happiness seems to be a momentary thing linked to the acquisition of something: objects, power, popularity; is a psychological recognition of himself, of a man's abilities and possibilities, and therefore also of a social recognition for being a satisfied individual.

However, everything is resized if the Individual isn't any more able to sustain the requests and the questions regarding the expectations about him. In Fact, although happiness is an individual issue, unhappiness is essentially determined by the inability of relationship with the community, where the individual is defined depending on his allocation in the society concerning his profession, class and wealth.

The social role is the fundamental element of the logics of accumulation of goods and services, and triggers a false movement finalized to the satisfaction and competitive accumulation of the individual in the society, on which the relationships became tool and means for social mobility.

Otherwise, the pre-modern social stratification, wasn't so defined and articulated and the 'presumed' poverty was crossed by solidarity and community integration, in the actual society paradoxically so many interests reduce the commitment in the search of the individual and collective comfort, and in doing this they put a great attention to the goods, credit, consumption, and to all of that is actually ephemeral (Sen 1993).

However, to take the his own existence it is opportune to break away from this dynamics, recovering the sense of society of which everyone is not a representation of interests or roles, but of social utility, of what everyone actually has as 'know how', of culture, of technique, of experience, of creativeness (Latouche 2011).

In this way happiness is no longer linked to the economic nets, but is also depending on the social relationships, on intersubjective relationships. The recognition of the other, of his biodiversity, it becomes a structuring element of the individual and social happiness.

Social happiness indicates and values how the society can be happy for what is successful on collective level (Phillips 1969). Is a kind of public happiness necessary to notice the global comfort and not the momentary and individual cheerfulness of a single one.

We should learn from each other and overcome gaps. In this way people would be stimulated and encouraged to be familiar with the unknown, be close

with the distant, make the alien one of us. “The expectation of happiness and ever more happiness came to be the main legitimating formula of social integration and the principal motivation of any individual’s involvement in joint endeavours and common causes. And it was now up to the state to demonstrate that such involvement was worth it – that it paid” (Bauman 2002, 139).

In his analysis of myths of our current age, Umberto Galimberti talks also about happiness, stating that the pursuit of and the tendency for happiness are part of the human nature. Happiness in fact is an existential condition aimed by all humans and that, owing to the fact that they are unable to reach it, they blame for their failure other people or the external world’s circumstances like love, health, money, physical aspect, work conditions, age and, in general, a large range of factors which are beyond humans’ control (2009).

Yet the attitude to happiness is accessible by every human being, despite his richness, his social status, his intellectual capabilities, his health conditions. Happiness does not depend from pleasure, from physical pain, from love, from the others’ consideration and admiration, but exclusively from the full acceptance of ourselves, which Nietzsche has summarised in the following aphorism "Werde, der du bist" (Nietzsche 1887, 158).

Hence, according to Galimberti, who is unhappy can only blame himself for his unhappiness, since the attitude to happiness, and therefore to good mood, is no more a matter of “mood”, but it is a real ethic duty. In fact, the attitude to happiness presumes a good knowledge of ourselves, which can allow us to automatically limit the excessive number of our desires and focus only on those compatible with our capabilities (2009, 73).

Within the context of an essentially sociologic reasoning, Galimberti’s and Bauman’s considerations overlap and place the happiness experience at a paramount distance from today’s secular and trivial concept, intended and interpreted as the pursuit of evanescent and insecure goals which are able to create distraction and freedom, inebriation and gratification, escape and oblivion from duties and responsibilities: the individual uselessly tries to escape not to face his own inconceivable unhappiness (Haybron 2008).

About one century ago Sigmund Freud, in his book *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (1930), stated that men always tend to trade happiness with wealth (Strachey 1990). Perhaps Freud overlaid optimistic, as he thought that the road toward happiness had to be paved by material goods. However what happened afterwards contradicted him, at least for that part of the world where daily life has lost its aspect of chronic insecurity and everlasting threat (Phillips 2012).

Money can’t buy happiness, as well as the professional career is not able to gratify our ego – it is universally confirmed by now – but it is rather at the top of social pressures, more or less equal to the beauty’s myth (Pelletier 2009).

Naturally wealth can grant a superior economic solidity, as it let us meet our primary needs, but all money can offer is about superfluous goods, which however are not necessarily able to improve our living's satisfaction (Bartolini 2010). On the contrary, wealth can often be harmful (Bansal 2008).

So, happiness and unhappiness can be measured also in dynamic terms, although, obviously, not everything having a static nature is equal to unhappiness and vice versa. But naturally the impossibility of change and living in an existential and moral stagnation reproduce a condition of chaos, helplessness and hence unhappiness (Punset 2005).

Bauman writes “many more people feel ‘unhappy’ than are able to pinpoint and name the causes of their unhappiness. The sentiment of ‘being unhappy’ is all too often diffuse and unanchored; its contours are blurred, its roots scattered; it still needs to be made ‘tangible’ – hammered into shape and named, in order to reforge the equally vague longing for happiness into a specific task. Looking at the other people’s experience – getting a glimpse of other people’s trials and tribulations – one hopes to discover and locate the troubles which caused one’s own unhappiness, attach to them a name, and so come to know where to look for ways of resisting or conquering them” (2012, 66).

More in depth, unhappiness can have a number of potentially attractive implications. If someone is unhappy, or thinks so, nobody will ask him anything more than what he can offer, nobody will expect much from him. However this will prevent him to have key social positions and be accountable for anything (Haybron 2008).

In fact, a person who is unhappy does not create any issues in social relationships, as he usually complies with the rules and tends to be subdued. Also in terms of social control, often applied by politicians, this supports and promotes the diffusion of unhappiness. Actually it is much simpler controlling people who feel powerless, resigned, passive, lazy, indolent, rather than people who are dynamic, vital and creative (Ahmed 2010). A number of entire professional sectors are based on unhappiness: social assistants, psychologists, psychotherapists, psychiatrics, volunteering associations, pharmacologists, prostitutes, etc., as well the consumption culture itself, which is nothing else but a tendency to soothe one’s own existential unhappiness (Soscia 2013).

But to really fight unhappiness we need something more than a simple wish, more than a mere hope; we need hard work, we need to be engaged in thinking something new, something that has never be seen before; we need to be brave in responding to the attraction of the unknown. The world cannot make progress without the courage and the joy of experimenting new frontiers. The push forward and, thus, the joy, like all the great vital emotions, are originated by something which is unforeseen and surprising, but which, on the

other hand, needs a creative engagement. An engagement which, often and above all, can materialise only taking care of one another (Risè 2014).

Indeed, true happiness, the authentic art of life, yesterday like today, consists of taking care of the others and giving priority to other people's happiness. To experience true happiness, we need not to withdraw from others, but looking for others (Donati 2011). The other man, the other woman, all living beings: plants, herbs, animals on earth, sea, air should be met, touched, watched, so that we may be amazed and charmed by their magnificence and disaster, by their beauty and their ability to unsettle (Bell 2010).

Thus the individual, the citizen, the active member of the society are obliged to cooperate, trespassing their frontiers and opening their heart to the collective life (Finnis 2011). Starting relationships, participating, sharing: these are the key milestones essential to approach the status of happiness. The environment where we've been borne and raised, the familiar context and the town, represent the essential component to realise our personal wellbeing and so our happiness. Also Weber considers happiness in relation to the community's wellbeing, which can be granted by social policy. With regard to the relationship between social policy and happiness, Weber asserts: "Our aim is [...] to create conditions, not that men may feel happier, but that under the necessity of the unavoidable struggle for existence the best in them – those physical and spiritual characteristics which we want to preserve for the nation – will remain protected" (1917, 26). In the Inaugural Address at the University of Freiburg (1895) he says: "For the dreamers of peace and happiness there stands written over the door of mankind's unknown future "surrender all hope" (Beetham 1985, 42).

The net of relationships represents therefore a copious resource to achieve important objectives and it is crucial to reinforce the social capital. For Coleman the social capital represents a resource which doesn't not lie neither in the individuals nor in the production's means, but in the structure of the social system (1990). Coleman departs from the intuitions of Loury (1977), an economist with whom he shared the idea that the neoclassic paradigm of economy is based on fiction "that society consists of a set of independent individuals, each of whom acts to achieve goals that are independently arrived at, and that the functioning of the social system consists of the combination of these actions of independent individuals" (1990, 300). To this fake picture of reality, the theory of social capital counter poses the nets of relationships which relate and influence the inter-individual exchanges. Under this perspective, Coleman defines social capital as "a variety of entities having two characteristics in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure.

Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that would not be attainable in its absence. Like physical capital and human capital, social capital is not completely fungible, but is fungible with respect to specific activities. A given form of social capital that is valuable in facilitating certain actions may be useless or even harmful for other. Unlike other form of capital, social capital inheres in the structure of relations between persons and among persons. It is lodged neither in individuals nor in physical implements of production” (1990, 302).

Social capital help people coordinate and act collectively and thanks to these peculiar capabilities the diffusion of trust is improved. Trust is a key element especially in today's social context, when the traditional pillars of a peaceful coexistence are wavering, making room to dangerous crumbling processes (Giddens 1990).

Trust is the glue which keeps together the collectivity (Weber and Carter 2003, 58), and Francis Fukuyama considers it as the social virtue which contributes to the creation of wealth and wellbeing and therefore a key element for the pursuit of happiness (1995). To this purpose it is important to remember the piece of advice that Steve Jobs gave to the students of Stanford University in 2005: “Don't lose faith. I'm convinced that the only thing that kept me going was that I loved what I did. You've got to find what you love. And that is as true for your work as it is for your lovers. Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle. As with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it. And, like any great relationship, it just gets better and better as the years roll on. So keep looking until you find it. Don't settle” (Blumenthal 2012). Since time immemorial happiness has been a fragile, an insecure and an easily influenced creature, and for this reason it may be altered. Happiness is made from expectations, hope, threaded together with the future (Jobs 2005).

Conclusion

Happiness contains in its self different meanings, social comfort, eudemonia, satisfaction for life. Therefore it is not easy to grasp it in a simple definition. Many are the factors that influence the concept and his perception from the individual; factors of social, economic and cultural character. As shown by the several searches done about the collettivity, it emerges that the perception of happiness is moving along a 'continuum', that goes from the satisfaction of the desires to the dispassion.

Two directors that have characterized last century. The pursuit of happiness has become a strategic objective, that underlines how in reality the economic growth doesn't automatically guarantee the happiness (Sotgiu 2015).

It begins a run-up between aspirations and realizations: once reached the destination, in terms of income, the individuals progressively lift up the crossbar of their next goals, reducing the degree of satisfaction for what already reached.

This potentially explains the meaningful increase of income from the age of the stone to today has not determined a linear and constant progress of the happiness, determining the paradox 'Easterlin' or paradox of happiness (1974).

The paradox of happiness shows as the happiness suffers negative effects both from the habit to the improvements of his own economic conditions and from the comparison with the economic conditions of the others. These negative effects nevertheless can be balanced by others factors that can be activated by the individual in his social context: the sharing, the equity, the social capital.

Is resulting that happiness ranks in the recomposition of the separations-oppositions between individual and context, that it conducts to an integrated vision of the happiness, in which the needs of the individual harmonize with those of the others members of collettivity (Arcidiacono 2013, 7).

Happiness is a feeling which increases over its duration, is gratitude for what is received, is celebration for the opportunity of giving, is fullness for meeting the other, despite the pains and the defeats of life (Ahmed 2010).

On the other hand if, owing to the miasma of the day-to-day life, the individual loses his moral tension towards the achievement of the happiness status, his existential condition will get hopelessly lost. And even worse, the flame burning inside him, and which is able to transform every single day into the right day for the fulfilment of a better stage of wellbeing and happiness, would turn in a feeble candle light doomed to fall into obscurity. "Being happy is a hard work. It is a construction: you have to build it, plank by plank, nail by nail, and check continuously that everything is in the right place and keep it clear all around. And then it needs a lot of maintenance" (Melnick 2014).

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